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Homeschooling in Rural Northwest Arkansas: An Investigation of Parent Choices

Kyle West Mallett

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HOMESCHOOLING IN RURAL NORTHWEST ARKANSAS: AN INVESTIGATION
OF PARENT CHOICES

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to the Graduate College
Arkansas Tech University

In partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of

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In School Leadership

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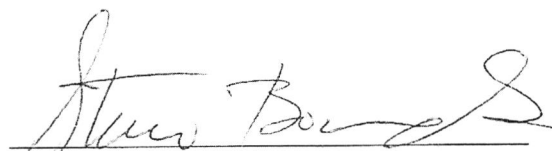
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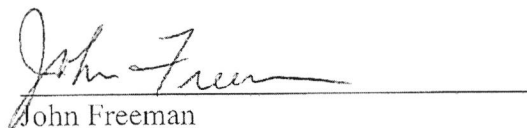
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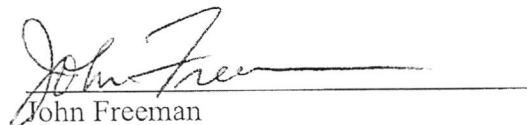


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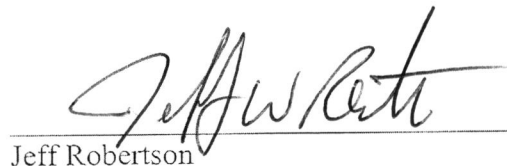
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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my family, Stephanie, Ellee, and Stevie. I cannot begin to thank you enough for your patience and understanding during this process. You didn't complain when I had to go work on my paper or needed to look up just one more thing before we could go play. Stephanie, thank you for being a role model for our girls. You showed them that they can accomplish anything from being a successful Nurse Practitioner, an amazing mother, and wife. Ellee and Stevie, this work is proof that if you set your mind to something and work hard, then anything is possible. Don't be afraid to be a difference maker and dream big. Girls, I cannot wait to see how you will change the world. I love you.

Abstract

Homeschooling is an option that is gaining momentum in America today. The practice of homeschooling is not a new or innovative idea but rather one from colonial times. The face and make-up of homeschooling have changed as have the reasons parents choose to homeschool their children. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the reasons parents chose to homeschool their children in Boone and Newton Counties in Northwest Arkansas. Questions regarding the specific reasons driving these parents to homeschool and rationale behind a consortium or group approach rather than traditional stand-alone homeschooling was also considered. Data was collected through an anonymous survey and distributed to the homeschool community located in Boone and Newton County. The study revealed moral and religious reasons play the most integral part of the parents' decision to homeschool. Social interaction with like-minded peers and curriculum were highly regarded as reasons to homeschool. The information gathered may be used to drive reform of public schools to fit the needs and wants all students and parents within these counties, state, and possibly America.

Keywords: homeschooling, Arkansas, reasons

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Chapter I: Introduction

Education is evolving in appearance and application. Now, more than ever, public school is not the only option. For a growing number of Americans, homeschooling is just one option among many to consider, for a few months or the entirety of a child's schooling (Gaither, 2009a). Homeschooling has long been part of the fabric of American education. The history of homeschooling in the United States, though varied in type and purpose, dates back to the earliest colonial settlers (Gaither, 2009b).

Homeschooling is no longer just an option for elite students but has appealed to a demographic diversity that includes virtually all races, religions, socioeconomic groups, and political viewpoints (Romanowski, 2001). “A demographically wide variety of people homeschool, these include atheists, Christians, and Mormons; conservatives, libertarians, and liberals; low-income families, middle-income families, and high-income families; African American, Hispanic, and white; parents with Ph.Ds, GEDs, and no high-school diplomas,” (Ray, 2016, para. 6).

The topic of homeschooling or home education is a significant concern for public schools. Homeschooling is on the rise. Over 2.3 million students are being homeschooled in the United States with a growth rate of between two to eight percent each year (Turner, 2016). Numerous studies and research has addressed the question of why parents choose to homeschool (Guterman & Neuman, 2017).

“The most common reasons given by parents or youth for homeschooling are to (a) customize or individualize the child’s education, (b) accomplish more academically, (c)use pedagogical approaches other than those typical in institutional schools,(d) enhance family relationships, (e) provide guided and

reasoned social interactions with peers and adults, (f) provide a safer learning environment,(g) avoid negative experiences parents had in institutional schools, and (h) fulfill the parents' job to teach and impart a particular set of values, beliefs, and worldview to their children and not delegate such to schools,” (Ray, 2015, p. 73).

Homeschoolers have created hybrid homeschools that blend elements of formal schooling into the traditional pattern of a mother teaching her children at home in an isolated environment (Gaither, 2009b). The use of hybrid homeschooling or consortiums is becoming more prevalent with the homeschooling community. A consortium is also called an alliance, association, cooperative, or group. In the homeschool environment, multiple families bond together and form their alliances, or consortiums, to educate their children in a homeschool environment. Students meet at least once a week with peers to discuss previous lessons and homework with a certified instructor. The consortium concept also allows students to participate in extracurricular activities such as field trips and intramural sports with other homeschool consortiums in the area. Homeschool students have attained the right to join the public school band, sport or to enroll in advanced chemistry because the public school has the necessary labs and teachers while taking her other coursework at home (Saiger, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

While homeschooling may not create an issue for large districts or urban schools that have large populations from which to draw students, homeschooling can present issues for smaller, rural districts where funding is tied to enrollment. If a district has 800 students and loses 100 to a homeschooling consortium, the movement may have a

significant financial impact on the school which, in turn, can impact the educational services to the school. In addition to experiencing a loss of students, public schools could see a decreased participation in activities such as band, sports, or other extracurricular activities that play an integral role within the school setting. It is vital that public school officials understand why homeschooling is becoming a primary educational option. To understand this current trend, educators must ascertain the reasons why parents are choosing to homeschool their children.

This study examined the reasons why parents in two rural, sparsely-populated counties in Northwest Arkansas choose to homeschool their children. Each county has a homeschooling consortium located in it. Data is scarce concerning the reasons why people in rural communities are choosing to homeschool their children using consortiums.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons why parents choose to homeschool their children in Boone and Newton Counties in Northwest Arkansas. Questions regarding the specific reasons driving these parents to choose a consortium or group approach rather than traditional stand-alone homeschooling were also considered. Once this information was gathered, it may be used to drive reform of public schools to fit the needs better and wants all students and parents within the district.

Research Questions

1. What are the reasons parents in two Northwest Arkansas counties choose to homeschool their children?
2. Are there any significant differences in reasons why parents choose to homeschool their children based on demographic factors?
3. What public school reform factors could influence homeschooling parents to send their children to public schools?

The Significance of the Study

This study was significant because it enabled the reader to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence parents in rural Northwest Arkansas to homeschool their children. The results may be used to determine additional factors that the public schools could change in order to keep parents from homeschooling at the current pace. The declining enrollment is placing a financial burden on public institutions. A substantial amount of funds used to operate public schools is based on the enrollment of students in their respective institution. The waning funds force the public institutions to make decisions on how to best use their funds. It may force them to cut programs such as the arts or other extracurricular activities that they were previously able to fund adequately. Lower funds could also lead to the possibility of the consolidation of multiple districts into one large district to become more fiscally sound.

This study used a survey approach and focused on two homeschool consortiums in Arkansas. Members of the consortium responded to an anonymous survey to determine the reasons they believe homeschool was the appropriate placement for their child(ren).

The findings and conclusions drawn from this study could be used as a basis to drive public school reform in Arkansas. The reform may focus on ways to better meet both the needs and the wants of all parents and students. This reform could begin a trend of more students and parents choosing a public institution for their education rather than homeschooling. School administration and officials would be more knowledgeable in the needs and wants of the stakeholders in the community, due to the new information gathered from this study.

The scope of the Study

The scope of the study was narrow. It focused on two homeschool counties with homeschool consortiums in rural Northwest Arkansas. The study sought to ascertain the reasons why parents in Boone and Newton counties choose to homeschool their children, primarily in a consortium. It also focused on gaining information from stakeholders regarding possible public school reform measures to improve practices and optimistically kept the parents from homeschooling their children and deter others in the future.

Participants

For this study, two counties were selected to examine the reasons in which parents in Boone and Newton counties are choosing to homeschool their children. Boone and Newton counties are located in Northwest Arkansas, and each of the counties is classified as rural.

Boone County is located on the Missouri and Arkansas borders. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2017), Boone County has a total population of 37,381 residents. The race and origin statistics are as follows: White 96.1%; African American 0.4%; American Indian 0.9%; Hispanic 2.4%. The average median income for Boone County is

\$38, 664, which is \$20,375 below the United States median. The county averages 62.5 people per square mile, and the median house in Boone County is valued at \$114,400.

Newton County is located in Northwest Arkansas and shares a border with Boone County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2017), Newton County has a total population of 7,828 residents. The race and origin statistics are as follows: White 95.7%; African American 0.4%; American Indian 0.9%; Hispanic 1.7%. Newton County's median household income is \$33,176, which is \$25,863 below the United States median. The county is sparsely populated with 10.1 people per square mile, and the median house in Newton County is valued at \$84,800.

The surveys were disseminated to the parents of homeschool students in both the Boone and Newton Counties homeschool cooperatives/consortiums. The functionality of the homeschool consortiums is similar to a public school without the rules and regulations from the Arkansas Department of Education. The parents of the homeschooled children bring their students to a central location 1-3 times per week. The leader of the consortium disseminates information to the parents and serves as the liaison to the parents as well as helps the students with their studies.

The choice to homeschool allows the parents more freedom to make decisions in their child's educational process. The number of students in the consortium classroom typically is smaller than a regular public school classroom. The consortium concept also allows students to participate in extracurricular activities such as field trips and intramural sports with other homeschool consortiums in the area.

Many studies have previously been conducted involving urban areas, but the data on rural communities is scarce. The data collected in this study could be used to

influence schools with similar economic and demographics across Arkansas or the rest of the United States.

Limitations

Two significant limitations of this study existed. First, the study focused on only two homeschool consortiums. These consortiums are in Boone and Newton County, which are located in Northwest Arkansas. The constituents in this area are primarily Caucasian in race, and both counties are classified as a moderately rural environment. Homeschool parents and communities generally avoid divulging a significant amount of data or information about their practices.

Delimitations

1. The study was only be given to parents in two homeschool consortiums in Boone and Newton Counties.
2. The researcher has a cordial relationship with the directors of the two consortiums.
3. The researcher is familiar with some parents and students in these two consortiums.

Definition of Terms

Consortium: an agreement, combination, or group (as of companies) formed to undertake an enterprise beyond the resources of any one member, (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Descriptive Survey: the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions, (Ponto, 2015, p. 168).

Homeschool: to teach school subjects to one's children at home, (Merriam-Webster, 2018)

Quantitative Study: Quantitative research gathers data in a numerical form which can be put into categories, or in rank order, or measured in units of measurement. This type of data can be used to construct graphs and tables of raw data, (McLeod, 2017, para. 29).

Chapter II: Review of the literature

"Homeschooling is defined as parent-led home-based education," (Ray, 2016, para. 1). Homeschooling can be accomplished in a plethora of ways. The literature review examined and elaborated on the following topics related to homeschooling: (a) history of homeschooling; (b) the reasons parents choose to homeschool their children; (c) types of homeschooling; (d) performance of homeschoolers; (e) misconceptions of homeschool (f) homeschooling in Arkansas. Each of these topics was addressed, but the review sought to accurately identify the factors on which parents are basing their decision to homeschool in depth.

The following question arose: are there factors, if addressed by public schools that could have kept their students enrolled in a public institution? Once this information was gathered, it could be used to drive the reform of public schools to fit the needs and wants of all students within the district. Over the past 30 years, homeschooling has exploded in popularity (Raley, 2017). In 2012, there were an estimated 1.9 million homeschooled students in the United States, which is an increase from 850,000 in 1999, when estimates were first reported (Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2017). Homeschool is not an option just for the wealthy elite, but also a viable option for many others due to new cyber school, online curriculum, and homeschool cooperatives. One of the more fascinating aspects of the home-school movement is its appeal to a demographic diversity that includes virtually all races, religions, socioeconomic groups, and political viewpoints (Romanowski, 2001). This movement could be because homeschooling is offered in a wide array of environments to meet the needs of all students rather than those students in the middle of the educational spectrum.

History of Homeschooling

Homeschooling has been in existence since the colonial era; however, compulsory schooling laws enacted in all states by 1918 put America's focus on institutionalizing education (Drenovsky & Cohen, 2012). The Supreme Court has never ruled on a case directly focused on homeschooling; however, two high court decisions have shaped the legal terrain for almost a century: *Meyer v. Nebraska*, decided in 1923, and *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, decided in 1925. Both firmly established parents' right to direct the education of their children, while at the same time making clear that the state has the right to regulate schooling (Kunzman, 2012). Another court case happened almost fifty years later. *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972) ruled Amish parents have the right to take their children out of public school after eighth grade for religious reasons. It stated homeschooling children would better help preserve the way of life that was sacred to the Yoder's Amish religion (Drenovsky & Cohen, 2012). It provided the viable option of homeschooling due to religious purposes. A 1997 court case, *Washington v. Glucksberg*, stated an alleged right would be considered fundamental if claimants can show the right is deeply rooted in history and tradition (Raley, 2017). Since homeschooling dates back to colonial times, the right to homeschool can be considered a fundamental right rooted in the nation's history, (Raley, 2017). Therefore, it is considered to be legal under the United States Constitution.

The modern homeschooling movement started as a grassroots effort in the 1970s on the part of secular educational reformers who believed that a traditional school setting was not conducive to their children's education (Gaither, 2009b). Homeschooling in the United States has been regulated on a state-by-state basis which has resulted in a

broad spectrum of state supervision, from no regulation on one end to high regulation on the other. By the early 1990s, homeschooling was legal in all 50 states even for parents with no teaching certifications (Ray, 2014). Even though homeschooling associations have achieved a considerable amount of success and continue to push for more freedoms, there continue to be opposing forces working to regulate home education practices (Thomas, 2016). According to Kenneth (2013), little consistency exists in homeschool regulation. States can take three approaches in the regulation of homeschooling: no regulation, some regulation, and extreme regulation. Most states adopt the second approach which requires parents to notify the school the state if they decide to homeschool their child. This approach allows the state to ensure that the student is at a minimum receiving a primary education from their home education program.

Reasons Why Parents Choose to Homeschool

The reasons why parents choose to homeschool their children are numerous and provide a significant amount of insight into the changes needed to bring this population back to public school. According to Ripperger-Suhler (2016), while a desire to provide religious or moral instruction may have once been a top reason to homeschool, these reasons have been surpassed by concerns about school environment; dissatisfaction with academic instruction in other schools; and reasons such as family time, finances, travel, and distance. Homeschooling represents a real alternative to traditional public education, as well as to the ideology of consumerism, conformity, and competition that permeates our increasingly standardized educational institutions (McReynolds, 2007). In today's society, many parents choose to homeschool their children because they do not believe public schools are adequately equipped to meet the needs of their children religiously or

educationally (Romanowski, 2001). Furthermore, according to Raley (2017), many homeschool parents and children believe schools place their interests above those of the students.

Homeschool parents have the option to educate their child in the way they deem most beneficial. Numerous restraints are placed on public education institutions that do not apply to homeschool students. Public school teachers are given thoughts, ideas, and methods to present material to students. Public school teachers are also limited by state mandates that can affect the quality of education that students receive (Thomas, 2016). However, this is not the case for homeschool students.

Furthermore, the curriculum which the parents use to homeschool their children is decided by the parent rather than a state or government institution. Also, the format chosen for methods is flexible in a homeschool setting, whereas, it can be rigorous and structured in the public school setting. Homeschool students can move freely from one setting to another without the restrictions of a brick and mortar school. Their learning can occur in a variety of environments rather than solely in a classroom or school setting. For all children, education takes place in more than just the building. Learning can occur at the store, church, athletic events, city events, and many other places a student will go throughout their day (Kunzman, 2012).

One final driving factor for many parents to homeschool their children is the availability of the public education setting to adequately meet the needs of students that require additional assistance for their extraordinary individual needs such as special education or gifted education. This assistance is not limited to resource classrooms but rather occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech, gifted and talented, accelerated

classes, and many other activities to help a student be successful. Studies show homeschooling may have advantages over a public school in educating students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (Duvall, Delquadri, & Ward, 2004). The ability or inability of one schooling method to meet the need of their student is many times a parent's deciding factor to homeschool their child or not.

The reasons that parents in a rural environment choose to homeschool their children is similar yet slightly varied.

“Rural parents were particularly likely to choose SunTech (Cyber School) for structural reasons, such as its broader range of classes, flexible schedule and to avoid long commutes. Rural parents were more likely to cite curriculum (and possibly behavioral) issues as driving their decisions to choose SunTech,” (Beck, Maranto, & Shakeel, 2016, para. 31).

Religious/Moral Education

“Religion has not only played a prominent role in the historical emergence of homeschooling, but it also serves as an essential motivation for homeschooling today” (Thomson, 2014, p. 12). “Religious rationales are by far the most substantial ideological justification for homeschooling in the United States; though concerns of racial violence and safety have also recently facilitated an increase in homeschooling” (Brewer & Lubienski, 2017, p. 25). In one homeschool study, the need and desire of parents to provide religious or moral education was cited by 72.3% of the participants (Dumas, Gates, & Schwarzer, 2010). “Home education based on religion may tend to make home educators more prone to stronger bonds within their particular subcultures” (Beck, 2015, p. 61).

Homeschooling is a form of education that appeals to religious conservatives with concerns over public school curriculum, and evangelicals are a significant factor in the homeschool regulatory environment (Vieux, 2014). “Homeschool parents rest on distinctly different cultural traditions, espouse different values, have different understandings of the problems in American schools as well as diverse educational philosophies and pose alternative ways of thinking about themselves as communities” (Murphy, 2013, p. 339). Faith is an essential part of some homeschool families. Some homeschooling families took advantage of their homeschooling freedoms when it came to their faith. They use Bible reading, memorizing passages, sing hymns, and family participate in devotionals as part of their educational curriculum (Thomas, 2016).

Public schools are required by the separation of church and state to refrain from providing a curriculum that may sway or influence a student to adhere to one form of religion or other. Homeschooling allows the parent to take complete responsibility for his or her child’s academic and moral upbringing (Terry, 2011). For parents, a common reason for seeking alternatives to public education is the desire to ensure that they receive instruction in accord with their religious beliefs. In many cases, these beliefs include exclusive claims about the nature of God, salvation, or morality (Farris, 2013).

Since the public school cannot privilege any single religious faith without summarily excluding others, what is left is an educational system where morality and moral education are mostly absent from the classroom. Homeschool is an answer to the moral conundrum of the public classroom, because in this “protective cocoon” the teaching of scientific and classical subjects can be

coupled with a moral education that is Christ-centered (Vigilant, Trefethren, & Anderson, 2013, p. 213).

Academic Rigor/Curriculum

Being highly familiar with their children, parents can implement curriculum and instruction that suits unique learning needs, interests, and produces greater educational gains (Cheng, Tuchman, & Wolf, 2016). If a curriculum is not working for their child, homeschooling gives parents and students the freedom to adjust the curriculum as needed rather than being tied to a set, pre-paced curriculum which is common practice in the traditional school setting (Jolly, Matthews, & Nester, 2013). Parents of gifted children felt the unique learning needs of their children were not appropriately met and, therefore, homeschooling was a better option (Jolly et al., 2013). Parents were not satisfied with the lack of academic challenge provided by public schools and believed one-on-one instruction provided the children with the opportunity to learn and at a faster pace while requiring less time as compared to the time spent in public schools (Saghir, 2011). For many, instructional time is dedicated mainly to the material that will be presented on the standardized test and to teaching test-taking strategies that will hopefully produce positive results that will reflect well on the students, teachers, school administrators, and school districts (Felkins, 2018). Parents decide to create environments that elicit children's curiosity that in turn stimulate the need to explore. Parents who choose to homeschool do so under the premise that the public school atmosphere does not promote learning and lacks rigor (Williams, 2018).

Due to the individualized instruction in a personalized setting that it offers, homeschooling may provide academic benefits for students with disabilities. Parents'

reasons for home education can include their child having a special education need or a learning difficulty that could be better addressed through home education (Arora, 2006).

“Parents, who may suspect their child has a special education need but are opposed to the idea of labeling that child with a learning disability, may choose to homeschool in order to provide the child with the personalized instruction that is necessary to help them succeed,” (Felkins, 2018, p. 43).

Environment

The concern with the school environment is one of the primary reasons parents give for choosing to homeschool their children (Williams, 2018). The parents who were concerned about the school environment elected to homeschool because they were unsatisfied and wished to shield their child from bullying, stigma, and other negative school interactions (Cheng et al., 2016). Some may view homeschooling as the only way to ensure that children are protected from the risk of physical and psychological harm that is prevalent in the public school environment (Felkins, 2018).

Family

“While homeschool families valued structure and replicated school structures at home, they also spoke of valuing the flexibility of life that home education afforded them” (Morton, 2010, p. 52). A family that is well-functioning and outwardly facing, in terms of strong relationships with the broader community, expresses a particular view about how life ought to be lived. The purpose of education is to enable learning in all settings and encourage the children to participate fully in the life of that family (Davies, 2015). The ability to move the academic schedule to fit the needs of the family, was highly significant for some families (Thomas, 2016).

To ensure the healthy growth of the children, it is the responsibility of the parents to lead as an appropriate example, and reduce the accessibility of immoral influence that can affect the child's growth (McLeod, 2016).

Types of Homeschooling

There are different styles and options for homeschool students available to parents. Many families provide homeschooling by purchasing a boxed curriculum with books and other materials that are premade. This curriculum can be based on religion, ideology, or secular teachings (Kenneth, 2013). Two popular homeschool curriculums are Classical Conversations and American School.

Other families provide instruction by allowing the student to explore interests through living everyday life (Ripperger-Suhler, 2016). The parents who choose to educate in this manner may want more flexibility to adopt a curriculum to meet their family's individual needs.

Still, others provide education through the use of online schools or cooperatives based locally or nationally. Homeschool children spend time at libraries, museums, factories, nursing homes, churches, or attend classes offered at a local public school, a community college, parks department, or other areas of interest (Lines, 2000). Unlike public school teachers who are often limited by certain factors such as the end of course examinations, homeschooling parents can educate their children with their motivations and needs in mind (Ripperger-Suhler, 2016).

Cyber charter schools are growing in popularity as a method of homeschooling students. These schools provide the students with the opportunity to access online curricular institutions from home. These cyber schools use certified teachers to present

the curriculum to the students through the online program. Cyber charter schools give parents an alternative to true public education as well as traditional homeschooling. Cyber charters use certified teachers, but parents can take a more active role in the education of their child. However, the school is still ultimately under the authority of the charter agency (Cambre, 2009). In order to retain some students, some public institutions are creating their own cyber charter schools. The cyber charter model is a relatively new strategy, but they are being created in response to the growing number of students enrolling in cyber charters each year.

Another popular method of performing homeschooling is for parents to join homeschool educational cooperatives or consortiums. This method of homeschooling is sometimes referred to as hybrid homeschooling. “Hybrid homeschools are schools in which students attend school with other students for 2 or 3 days per week in traditional classroom settings, and are homeschooled the balance of the week,” (Wearne, 2016, p. 364). These cooperatives meet many of the perceived weaknesses of homeschooling. Students meet at least once a week with peers to discuss previous lessons and homework with a certified instructor. Each of the cooperatives adopts the curriculum that will be presented to the students; many times it is more religious-based and substantially more rigorous than that used in the public school systems. These cooperatives also fill the social interaction void that is created through the homeschool process. Many of the cooperatives even have their athletic teams that compete against other homeschool cooperatives in the area.

Performance of Homeschoolers

According to the latest research, homeschool students can make up to one-third of some universities' enrollment (Snyder, 2013). These students are coming in prepared for the tasks that are laid before them by the university. According to Ray (1997), homeschool students and families were used to analyze homeschooler performance in the United States. His study concluded that on average, homeschoolers performed better in all subjects. The number of years a student was homeschooled also demonstrated a significant difference in academic success. This data is contrary to what was once believed. Historically, homeschoolers were considered to be awkward and unable to adjust to the college setting. However, this was not the case but quite the opposite.

Data shows that on the ACT, homeschool students had higher scores than public educated students (Thomas, 2016). Thomas (2016) concludes this could be because homeschool students generally come from higher incomes and parental involvement.

Common Homeschool Misconceptions

Homeschooling is plagued with numerous unsubstantiated myths. One of the most common myths is homeschooling will produce students that are unable to interact with their fellow peers socially. This myth revolves around the assumption parents shelter students from the real world and therefore students are not able to experience the real world (Romanowski, 2006). Instead, homeschool students are provided situations to interact with others in real-world settings that students in public schools will never have the chance to in their school setting. Homeschool students enter college at or above the same level socially as students that attended a public school. Many times, these

homeschool students meet at least once a week to interact with their peers in an educational or social setting.

Another common misconception about homeschooling is that the rigor of the curriculum is not as high in the homeschool setting as it is in the public school setting. This theory is based on the presumption many homeschool students dropped out of public school because it was too complicated. This theory may not be the case. Many times the rigor of the curriculum is substantially higher in the homeschool setting since it is easier to provide each student with a curriculum that meets his or her individual needs. Students can work at or above their proficiency level. Almost one in four homeschool students (24.5%) are enrolled in one or more grades above their nominal grade (Butler, 2000).

Homeschooling in Arkansas

Arkansas has a K-12 student enrollment of 478,318 students for the 2018-19 school year according to the Arkansas Department of Education Data Center. The homeschool students are divided among 262 school districts and 85 enrollment charters dispersed throughout the state, (ADE Data Center/Arkansas K-12 Profile, 2017). According to the 2016-2017 Annual Homeschool Report published by the Arkansas Department of Education, the total homeschool population in Arkansas is 19,520 students (Arkansas Department of Education, 2016).

The leading homeschool organization in Arkansas is The Education Alliance. This organization was formed in 1989 and focused on helping parents who choose to homeschool their children, (The Education Alliance, 2018). While parents have the right to choose which way to formulate the homeschool experience for their student and

situation, many times they will need help in the beginning. In these cases, groups like The Education Alliance provide a beneficial resource. The researcher for this study could not find data about the number of students enrolled in each particular type of homeschooling in Arkansas; however, the Educational Alliance website lists 76 different homeschool support groups located across the state.

To better meet the needs of the homeschool population in Arkansas, the Arkansas Department of Education created the Homeschool Office division. “The Homeschool Office was established in October 1999 to promote collaboration between homeschool parents, public schools, and the Arkansas Department of Education” (Arkansas Department of Education/Homeschool, 2017, para. 1). This office provides a place for parents who choose to homeschool their students to find the rules and regulations associated with homeschooling in Arkansas. The state of Arkansas has numerous laws on the subject of homeschooling. The last major update to these laws was in 2017 during the legislative session.

One of the primary responsibilities of parents choosing to homeschool their child is to update the Notice of Intent to Homeschool and waiver forms each year. The notice to homeschool was addressed in Act 635 (Arkansas Code § 6-15-503) in 2017 by the Arkansas General Assembly. This bill states it is the parent's responsibility to complete this intent each school year before August 15 for fall semester or December 15 for the spring semester. In addition, this form must be given to the public school superintendent in which the student would have been enrolled.

In some cases, homeschool parents want their children to have access to participate in opportunities that are not available in the homeschool setting. For this

reason, Arkansas has passed laws to provide opportunities for homeschool students to attend public schools for partial days. In 2014, Arkansas passed the first state law (revised in 2017) to allow homeschool students to participate in interscholastic athletics, Arkansas Code § 6-15-509 or known as Act 592. The parents and the school must reach an agreement, and then the student is immediately eligible to participate in the interscholastic activity. One of the stipulations in Act 592 is that the homeschool student can only enroll in the public school institution in which their residence is geographically located.

Another major piece of legislation governing homeschool practice in Arkansas is Arkansas Code § 6-18-232 or known as Act 173. Similar to Act 592, Act 173 allows the homeschool student to participate in a part of the public school organization. Act 173 states a public school district or an open-enrollment public charter school may allow a student who homeschools to enroll in an academic course at a public school or an open-enrollment public charter school. The only condition is that the student resides in the public school district where the public school or open-enrollment public charter school is located. Act 173 allows homeschool students to take courses from the public institution that may otherwise be unavailable to them. Many times this is an upper-level course. In order to enroll, the student must live within the public school's district and reach an agreement with the school district. Act 173 also allows the school district to receive a percentage of compensation from the state and federal governments in regards to the number of students enrolled.

Homeschool Numbers in Arkansas

According to the Arkansas Department of Education website, “Homeschool office receives homeschool student data from all 236 school districts. This information may be used only for statistical purposes and test administration. The office compiles and publishes a Homeschool Report in September of each year that provides enrollment statistics for the previous year”, (Arkansas Department of Education/Homeschool, 2017, para. 4).

The last report published was based on data for the 2016-17 school year. Statistics for Boone and Newton counties follow.

According to the 2016-17 Homeschool Report, the total number of students in Arkansas enrolled in homeschool education is 19,451. In Boone County, there are 6,280 school aged children. The number of students who attend a public or private educational system is 5,862. The homeschool population for Boone County is 418 students, and the percentage of homeschool students in Boone County is 6.6561%.

In Newton County, there are 1,311 school-aged children. The number of students who attend a public or private educational system is 1,180. The homeschool population for Newton County is 131 students, and the percentage of homeschool students in Newton County is 9.9924%.

History of Homeschooling Cooperatives in Boone and Newton Counties

The homeschool consortium in Boone County was formed in 2010 when the local Christian Private School closed its doors. Parents of this school still wanted to provide their children with a quality private education based on Christian principles. They adopted and still use the Classical Conversations curriculum. The students in this

consortium meet one to three times a week with an instructor. These students participate in a wide array of extracurricular activities such as field trips and intramural sports with other local homeschool groups.

In Newton County, the homeschool consortium was formed in 2004. The event that led to this was unknown. Like the Boone County Consortium, the curriculum used is faith-based, Classical Conversations. The students in this consortium meet one to three times a week with a certified instructor.

A central director of operations runs each of the cooperatives. This person is in charge of the day to day operations of the homeschool consortium. They also ensure an instructor for the students, plan educational experiences, plan and coordinate intermural athletics, and perform any other functions as needed.

The data on the formation of the cooperatives is housed with the Boone and Newton County homeschool cooperatives. Information was also obtained from the homeschool directors in each of the counties.

Conclusion

According to Romanowski (2001), home-schoolers and public educators must find a way to work together in order to better meet the needs of all students. This partnership will help foster a nation driven and focused on improving the quality of education that is provided to all students and in all settings. The ultimate goal for our nation should be to provide every student in the United States with a quality education, preparing them for their future careers. There is not one type of educational setting to meet the needs of all students. Some students may thrive in a public institution while others may require homeschooling to meet his or her needs better. This fact does not

make one method better for every student but quite the contrary. Each student comes with a wide array of traits that make them unique and therefore need an educational setting that is as unique as they are needed to meet their characteristics and desires.

Chapter III: Methodology

After an in-depth literature review on homeschooling, it is evident the reasons parents choose to homeschool their children are unique to each family. However, similarities arose in certain circumstances and geographic regions throughout the country.

For this study, a quantitative method was chosen by the researcher to examine the reasons parents in the homeschooling communities located in Boone and Newton Counties are choosing to homeschool using consortiums.

Quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or is used to explain a particular phenomenon (Babbie, 2010).

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the reasons parents in Arkansas, specifically Boone and Newton Counties, are using choosing to homeschool. The information gathered may be used to drive reform of public schools to more thoroughly address the needs and wants all students and parents within the district.

An estimated 3.4 million U.S. adults have been homeschooled for at least one year of their K-12 years, and they have homeschooled an average of six to eight years (Ray, 2016). The number of parents choosing to homeschool their children has increased significantly in the past decade. Homeschooling is no longer just an option for elite students but has appealed to a demographic diversity that includes virtually all races, religions, socioeconomic groups, and political viewpoints (Romanowski, 2001). The

reasons for this trend are numerous. Data shows these reasons could include safety, curriculum, organization, environment, and a multitude of other factors deemed substantial in the eyes of the parent. The investigation of this topic allowed the researcher to gain insight into the reasons parents are choosing to homeschool their children in rural Northwest Arkansas. Information collected could be used to ascertain which practices or issues within the current public school system is causing parents to remove their child(ren) from the public education setting. Furthermore, this data could also drive public school reform and diminish the number of students being homeschooled.

The study will be limited to Boone and Newton counties. The demographics for these counties are similar to one another. Contact with the local homeschool cooperatives in Boone and Newton County was established. In Boone and Newton Counties, the homeschool cooperatives are organized by directors. These directors run the weekly operation of the cooperatives, plan learning excursions, organize intramural athletics, and complete any other tasks that arise. To collect data for this study, a Google Survey was disseminated to the parents choosing to homeschool their children in Boone and Newton Counties through the homeschool consortium directors. The directors were asked to email the survey link to the parents and provide them with a hard copy of the purpose of the study which contains a link to the survey. One homeschool director posted the survey on the Boone and Newton County homeschool groups Facebook page. The cooperative's administrators gave their constituents periodic email and face to face reminders asking them to complete the survey. This step provided complete anonymity for the parents taking the survey.

This demographic will be a small segment of the homeschool population within the state and the country. However, the data from these two counties proved valuable in determining the reasons parents are choosing to homeschool their children in rural Northwest Arkansas. The data collected could be generalized for other parts of the country.

Research Questions

In this process of determining the factors of why parents are choosing to homeschool their children, the following questions must be answered:

1. What are the reasons parents in two Northwest Arkansas counties homeschool their children?
2. Are there any significant differences in reasons why parents choose to homeschool their children based on demographic factors?
3. What public school reform factors could influence homeschooling parents to send their children to public schools?

Survey Development

The survey (Appendix C) for this study was developed based on three different homeschool surveys. The oldest survey, the National Household Programs Survey, has been administered since 1999 by the United States Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2016). The survey was last administered in the year 2016. It consists of questions that gather demographics, methods used, outcomes, child's mental/physical ability, and reasons why the decision was reached to homeschool. Questions from the survey were modified to meet the needs of the current research being conducted.

A survey instrument used by the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) based on the work of Dr. Brian Ray was used to create the survey as well, (National Home Education Research Institute, n.d.). This survey focused on the current educational practices in America and two questions dealt with the issues of homeschooling, and the reasons parents chose to homeschool their children. Dr. Brian Ray is a leader in the field of homeschooling and has written numerous papers on the topic. He is also the head of the NHERI.

A third survey instrument was used to formulate survey questions. This survey is loosely based on the dissertation of Kimberly J. McFall, who focused on the current trends in homeschool education. McFall (2016) created a 58-question survey to gather data.

The survey for this study consists of 48 questions. The survey begins by asking about demographics, family dynamics, and structure of the homeschool environment in which a student is participating. Then it progresses to questions seeking to determine the reasons parents choose to homeschool. This section of questions uses a 5-point Likert scale with (1) representing "strongly disagree" to (5) a "strongly agree" factor in the decision to homeschool their child(ren). The next section of the survey asks a question about possible public school reform. It concludes with an open response question to allow the participant to provide any other useful information not directly asked in the survey that played an essential role in their decision.

To test the validity of the questions and how they are phrased, a pilot group of five homeschool families were given the survey. It allowed the researcher to determine if

the questions need rewording or if the survey questions provided the researcher with the appropriate data to answer the research questions.

Data Sources and Collections

Data was collected to determine the reasons why parents in these two rural Northwest Arkansas counties choose to homeschool their children, primarily using a consortium rather than stand-alone homeschooling.

The researcher for this study filed an application with the Arkansas Tech University Instructional Review Board to conduct research and was approved to conduct research (Appendix A). Once approval was granted, cooperative directors disseminated the survey to the parents of the homeschooling students in both Boone and Newton County cooperatives using a Google link provided to them by the researcher. The purpose of the survey and link to the survey was emailed to the parents by the directors. Each parent also received a hard copy of the purpose of the survey and link to the survey by the homeschool directors. The homeschool director in Boone County also posted the description, purpose, and link on the Boone and Newton County homeschool groups Facebook page. These copies were delivered to the homeschool directors by the researcher.

The survey remained open for two and a half weeks, and periodic reminders were given to complete the survey through email and verbal interactions between the cooperative administrators and parents. One final reminder was given within the day before the survey was closed. The cooperative homeschool administrators provided the final reminder through an email, face to face interaction, and an additional Facebook

post. Communication between the Cooperative administrators and researcher occurred throughout the process of data collection.

Ethical Considerations

This study consisted of information gathering. No participants were harmed due to the data collection. Parents were given the opportunity to answer questions with full anonymity. The participants were notified in writing, by email, and by Facebook post (Appendix B) of the exact purpose of the survey. The reminders were emailed by the cooperative homeschool directors. Participants of the study had no face-to-face interaction or any other form of communication with the researcher other than completing a digital survey on which no identifiable information was collected. No further information was gathered once the survey window closed.

The researcher for this study had a collegial relationship with the two supervisors of the consortiums. These relationships had no impact on the data collected in this survey, and limited contact between the researcher and homeschool directors occurred. Interactions began with one face to face meeting. In the meeting, the researcher asked for permission and help with the survey and gathered historical information on both of the cooperatives. The directors were also shown a hard copy of the survey and asked for their input on additions or eliminations they felt needed to occur. In the meeting, the researcher provided the directors with the hard copies of the survey link which stated the purpose of the survey to circulate to the parents. Emails and text messages were exchanged containing the same information and purpose of the survey provided to the administrator as a hard copy. Furthermore, text messages were exchanged between the

researcher and director regarding the data collection process and timetable for providing the parents with reminders to complete the survey.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data and formulate trends and commonalities in the collected responses. Further analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS statistical software to determine the differences that existed based on demographic variables. This analysis allowed the researcher to gain a more in-depth look into the reasons parents are choosing to homeschool their children in these two rural Northwest Arkansas counties.

The results may be used to offer suggestions to public schools regarding how the current system could be restructured to meet the needs and wants of the homeschool population. These changes may not ultimately bring students back to public institutions but rather might entice others to stay in a public education setting rather than choose to homeschool.

Summary

For this quantitative study, the researcher collected data for two and a half weeks. Cooperative administrators were asked to give periodic reminders to the parents during those two weeks and a half weeks to complete the survey on behalf of the researcher. These reminders by the cooperative homeschool director allowed the parents to answer the survey with complete anonymity. No identifiable information was gathered during the collection of survey data.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the reasons parents in the Northwest Arkansas Counties of Boone and Newton are choosing to homeschool their children. The information was analyzed for commonalities to determine the areas in which the current public school district is failing to meet the needs and wants of the parents within the community in regards to educating their children. The information gathered may then be used to drive reform of public schools to better fit the needs and wants of all students and parents within the community.

This study was a quantitative descriptive study, which allowed the researcher to gain insightful and valid data on the current perceptions of the homeschool population of how the current public school system is failing to meet their needs and wants for their children's education. This chapter includes an analysis of the data collected, the results and themes related to each of the three research questions, and a summary of the findings of the study.

For this study, the researcher contacted the homeschool directors of the cooperatives located in Boone and Newton Counties. Both of the directors were cordial, but the Boone County director provided access to her cooperative and agreed to help with the study. She agreed to act as the liaison between all of the parents within the Boone and Newton County cooperatives. She answered questions and provided feedback and her opinion to the researcher. Furthermore, she offered to disseminate the surveys via hardcopy, email, and a Facebook post to the Boone and Newton County homeschool Facebook page as well as to the parents within her cooperative. The homeschool population in Boone, Newton, and surrounding counties have a shared homeschool

support page. On this page, the cooperative director posted the purpose and link to the survey. All information gathered was anonymous and completed digitally.

The survey sought to answer the following three questions: (a) What are the reasons parents in two Northwest Arkansas counties homeschool their children; (b) Are there any significant differences in reasons why parents choose to homeschool their children based on demographic factors; (c) What public school reform factors could influence homeschooling parents to send their children to public schools?

The survey consisted of 48 questions and took the parent or guardian less than twenty minutes to complete. The survey asked questions regarding demographics, family dynamics, and structure of the homeschool environment in which the student currently participates. The survey probed deeper into determining the reasons parents chose to homeschool in Boone and Newton Counties. In the part of the survey seeking answers for the reasons parents homeschool, it used a 5-point Likert scale with (1) representing "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree". The final section of the survey sought answers to the question about possible public school reform. The survey allowed parents to provide any pertinent information not asked in the survey regarding the reasons why they chose to homeschool their child(ren).

To test the validity of the questions and how they were phrased, a pilot group of five homeschool families was given the survey. The pilot group allowed the researcher to determine if the questions needed to be reworded or if the survey questions were providing the researcher with the appropriate data to answer the research questions.

In this quantitative study, parents were given a link to an anonymous Google Survey. The cooperative homeschool director disseminated the survey link via email,

hard copy, and the local homeschool support group Facebook page. The Facebook page had 60 members who were currently homeschooling their children in Boone and Newton Counties, or had in the past. The post, email, and hard copy included a brief description of the survey and the reason for the study.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data and to extrapolate themes and commonalities in responses. Further analyses were completed using IBM SPSS statistical software to determine if any statistical differences existed based on demographic variables. This analysis allowed the researcher to develop more in-depth perspectives regarding the reasons parents are choosing to homeschool their children in these two rural Northwest Arkansas counties.

The target audience for this survey were the parents or guardians homeschooling their child(ren) in Boone and Newton Counties. The researcher knew, and had access to, the homeschool cooperatives in this area of Arkansas. These two homeschool consortiums had a total enrollment of approximately 100 students. A total of 26 responses was obtained from this population. This sample response represents an estimated response rate of 26% of students serviced by the homeschool cooperatives. However, approximately 60% of the families within the cooperatives have more than one child enrolled in the cooperative. This possibly lead to the relatively small number of responses to the survey. Figure 1 is an illustration of the comparison of the total number

of survey requests sent compared to the surveys received.

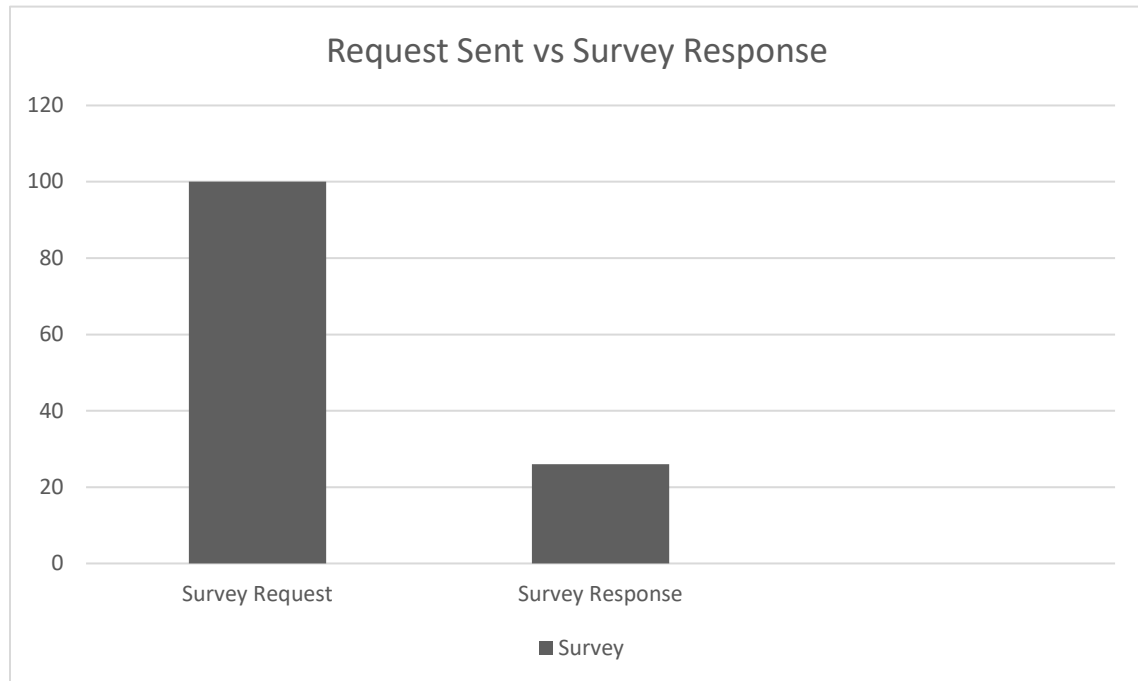


Figure 1. Surveys sent compared to surveys received

Research Question 1: What are the reasons parents in two Northwest Arkansas counties homeschool their children?

Data was collected through the use of an anonymous Google survey regarding the reasons why parents in Boone and Newton counties decided to homeschool their children. The survey used a 5-point Likert scale with one representing “strongly disagree” and five representing “strongly agree.” The data from the Google survey was imported into IBM SPSS software and descriptive statistics were computed. For each of the 21 factors considered in this study, a total and mean response was computed. A rank order list of the reasons why parents in Boone and Newton Counties chose to homeschool their child (ren) was created. The item with the highest total was the most predominant reason most parents decided to homeschool their child(ren). The lowest total was

considered the least common reason. The order of reasons parents chose to homeschool is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Reasons for Homeschool

| Reason | Sum | Mean | Mode | Standard Deviation |
|----------------------------|-----|------|------|-----------------------|
| Moral/Religious | 116 | 4.64 | 5.00 | 0.569 |
| Peers/Values | 115 | 4.60 | 5.00 | 0.913 |
| Individualized Instruction | 115 | 4.60 | 5.00 | 0.764 |
| More Time With Child | 112 | 4.48 | 5.00 | 0.872 |
| Flexible Schedule | 110 | 4.40 | 5.00 | 0.957 |
| Different Curriculum | 110 | 4.40 | 5.00 | 1.080 |
| Non-Traditional Approach | 104 | 4.16 | 5.00 | 1.106 |
| Drugs/Alcohol | 100 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 1.000 |
| Public School Policies | 94 | 3.76 | 4.00 | 1.268 |
| Academic Rigor | 94 | 3.76 | 4.00 | 1.012 |
| Common Core | 94 | 3.76 | 5.00 | 1.128 |
| Smaller Class Size | 93 | 3.72 | 5.00 | 1.458 |
| Bullying | 85 | 3.40 | 3.00 | 1.118 |
| Safety of Student | 77 | 2.06 | 3.00 | 1.341 |
| Student Special Needs | 74 | 2.96 | 1.00 | 1.670 |
| Issue With Teacher | 48 | 1.92 | 1.00 | 1.552 |
| Travel Time to School | 47 | 1.88 | 1.00 | 1.130 |
| Issue With Administrator | 46 | 1.84 | 1.00 | 1.281 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|----|------|------|-------|
| Issue With Student | 46 | 1.84 | 1.00 | 1.375 |
| Frequent Job Relocation | 42 | 1.68 | 1.00 | 1.215 |
| Issue With Staff Member | 37 | 1.48 | 1.00 | 1.085 |

Wanting to homeschool for moral/religious reasons was the most important reason why parents in Boone and Newton Counties homeschool their children. Moral and religious reasons, peers with shared values, individualized instruction, spending more time with family, a flexible schedule, wanting to provide different curriculum, providing a non-traditional approach, and drugs or alcohol were also reasons why parents choose to homeschool their child(ren).

Moral/Religious Reasons. The desire of parents to provide their child(ren) with moral or religious lessons was the number one reason they chose to homeschool. Seventeen of the 25 responses listed this as “strongly agree.” Figure 2 shows the number of responses by the level of agreement with the statement.

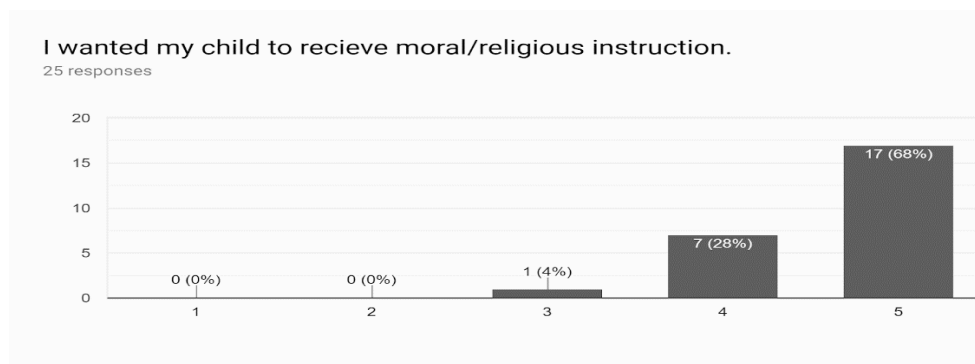


Figure 2. Moral/Religious Instruction

One of the parents in the survey stated, "I want God to be first. I want to instill a Love of learning as a lifelong habit. I want Great Literature." Public schools cannot provide this type of instruction or teaching due to legal stipulations. Homeschool

provides the parents with the ability to instruct, teach, and model the students based on their unique thoughts, ideas, and beliefs. The parents can put God in the center of all academics.

Peers with Shared Values. The second leading reason for homeschooling was parents wanted their children to interact with peers who grew up in homes with the same moral/ethical values. One parent stated, "The public school system is like a little nightclub. Kids are having sex and selling drugs in the bathrooms. I have seen many, many messages from different kids explaining this! The school needs to stop letting the kids be the boss." This sentiment is not an isolated statement from a parent but rather is repeated throughout the comments. Parents have a strong desire for their children to grow up with peers that share the same good/wholesome values. Another parent stated, "My son complained he was exhausted by the extreme immorality of kids around him." Other parents shared the same thoughts and beliefs. The parents were astounded at the level of disrespect that students show each other and the teachers in public schools. Figure 3 shows the number of responses by the level of agreement with the statement regarding parents wanting their children to have peers with shared values.

I wanted my child(ren) to be around others(peers) who share my values and beliefs.

25 responses

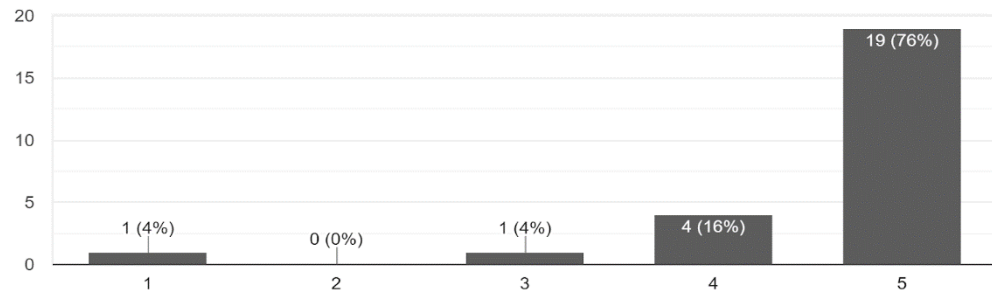


Figure 3. Peers with Shared Values

Individualized Instruction. The data suggests that the parents want the curriculum to educate their child to meet the individual characteristics that make them unique. The curriculum can be tailored to meet the student's skills, current knowledge base, as well as their interests. As one respondent said, "I want individualized academics to meet the age and stage of my child's development." Figure 4 shows the number of responses by the level of agreement with the statement, "I want more individualized instruction for my child."

I wanted more individualized instruction for my child.

25 responses

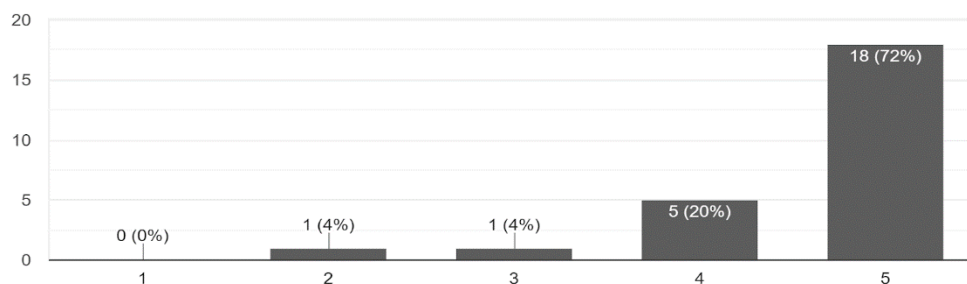


Figure 4. Individualized Instruction

More Time with Child. One parent stated,

"I have enjoyed the extra time I get to spend with our children. They are truly a delight to be around. I enjoy watching them mature and learn and am proud to be a part of that process."

The bond between the parent and child is strengthened in many cases because the parent and child can spend a large quantity of time together each day. A parent stated, "Watching my children grow and develop is heartwarming. I know that I am playing a large part in the person that they are becoming. I want our bond to be stronger than between my children and their peers." Figure 5 represents the data received for the reason I want to spend more time with my children.

I wanted to spend more time with my child(ren).

25 responses

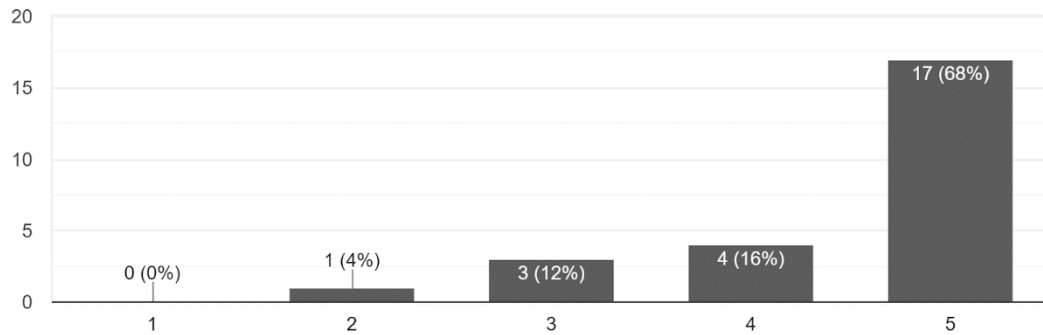


Figure 5. More Time with Child

Flexible Schedule. The fifth most common reason parents chose to homeschool was for a more flexible schedule. Figure 6 shows the number of responses by the level of agreement with the statement regarding flexibility.

I wanted more flexibility to schedule trips, vacations, experiences, etc.

25 responses

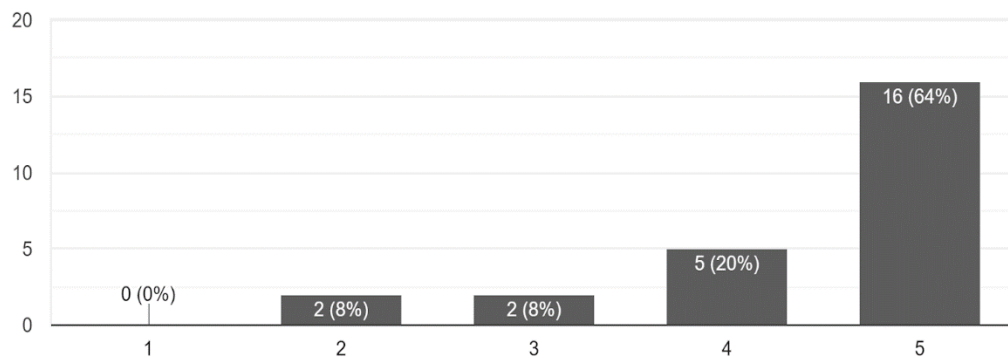


Figure 6. Flexible Schedule

The flexibility of homeschooling allows the parent and child to interact in different settings and get to know one another on a deeper level. Furthermore, parents of homeschool children can structure their school schedules around activities and vacations.

Homeschooling can lend flexibility to students with specific needs that a public school may not be able to address adequately. One parent states, "My child needed more one on one, and a slow pace of learning due to his developmental delays but the school's special education services were not to our satisfaction. He was falling too far behind because, even in special education, they have more than one student to tend to and he requires one on one all day." This statement exemplifies the fact that the flexibility of homeschool allows their student to be successful. They went on to state the flexibility of homeschooling allows their child to perform well without the use of medication, due to lack of interruptions throughout the day.

Provide a Different Curriculum. Numerous other parents stated they were looking for a curriculum that did not focus so much on taking a standardized test but rather the art of learning. They wanted a curriculum that challenges their child to think rather than be able to memorize facts and figures. One respondent stated,

I feel too much time is spent teaching kids to get through standardized tests than how to learn. The classical style of teaching no longer exists in public schools. There is so much pressure put on the teachers to 'teach' to the big test, which determines how much funding the school will receive. The pressure then carries over to the students, which in my opinion is unacceptable and wrong! Also, I believe educational materials in the public school are incredibly biased against a

conservative viewpoint. No longer are facts stated but aimed at demoralizing our past.

Figure 7 shows the number of responses by the level of agreement with the statement regarding a different curriculum.

I wanted to provide a different curriculum than what is offered in the public school.

25 responses

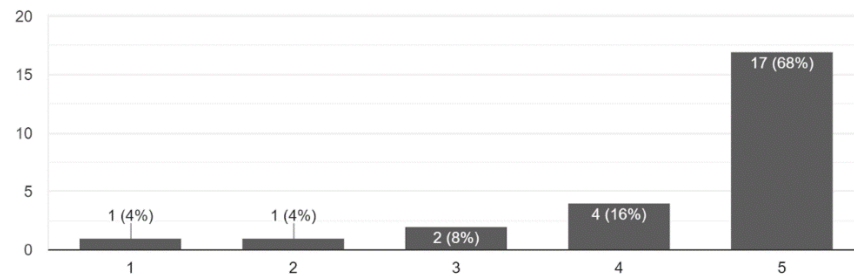


Figure 7. Provide a Different Curriculum

Non-Traditional Approach. Providing a non-traditional approach for their child(ren)'s education had a mean of 4.16. This data suggests parents put a strong emphasis on providing their child(ren) with a different and less-regulated form of education. They want the ability to provide them with lessons outside the realm of what is considered normal by public school standards. One parent stated, "I want to be able to deal with 'heart' issues as they arise." Another parent stated,

I want my children to be well rounded and not just taught to be able to take tests.

I believe the public school has failed our children. They need more time to play and get out their energy than sitting still in a classroom for hours at a time.

These parents want to instill in their children a love of learning and show them authentic learning can happen anywhere in a variety of ways. Figure 8 shows the number

of responses by the level of agreement with the statement regarding a non-traditional approach.

I wanted to provide a non-traditional approach to education.

25 responses

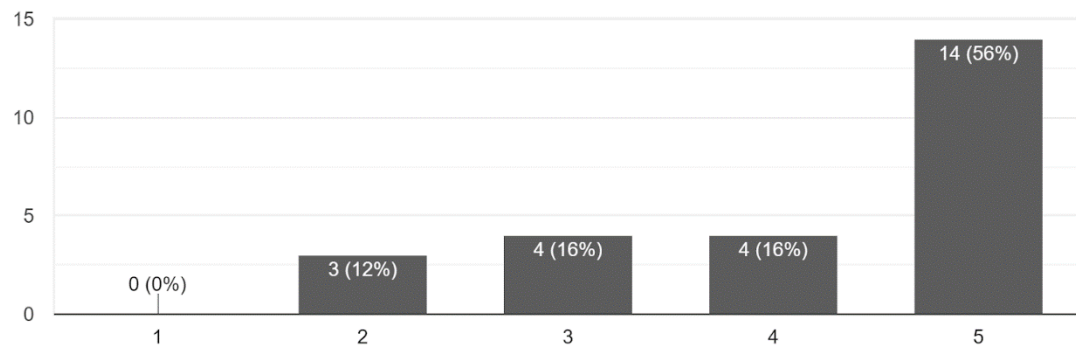


Figure 8. Non-Traditional Approach

Drugs and Alcohol. The safety of a student at school always has been, and will continue to be, a concern for parents. Data for this concern can be seen in Figure 9. This figure shows that 20 out of a possible 25 parents state the fear of exposure to drugs or alcohol was a driving force behind their decision to homeschool the child(ren). A parent stated, "The problem with drugs and introduction to drugs in our local school is a significant concern. Not necessarily the academics in the school, but how dangerous drugs are in the school, even for students as young as middle school."

I was concerned my child would be exposed to drugs/alcohol in a public school.

25 responses

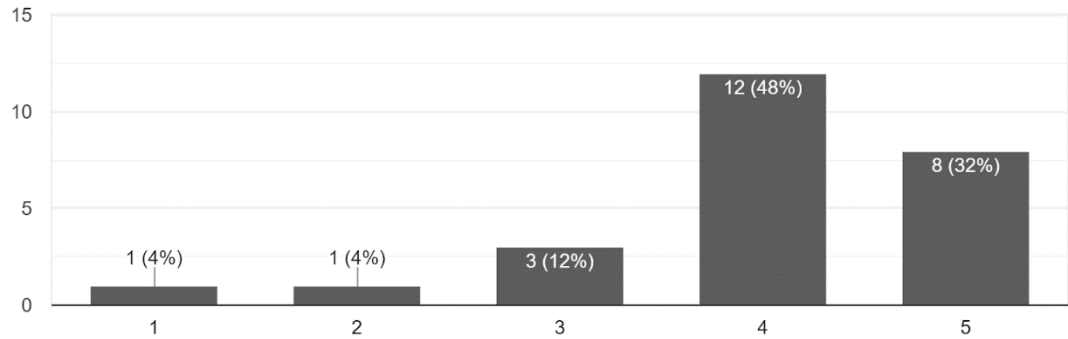


Figure 9. Drugs and Alcohol

Summary of Research Question 1

The desire of parents for their child's moral and religious instruction, surrounding them with like-minded peers, and providing an individualized, flexible curriculum are the top reasons parents in Boone and Newton Counties chose to homeschool. Parents expressed the overwhelming feeling that moral and or religious curriculum should take precedence.

In addition, parents wanted their child's education to focus more on learning rather than a standardized test. Parents wanted their child to be with peers that came from homes that shared their family's values and morals. Finally, the flexibility of homeschooling to provide an individualized and alternative curriculum was appealing. Parents could structure their lives around events that they wanted to do and experience together rather than a government-issued timeframe which is adhered to in the public school setting.

Research Question 2: Are there any significant differences in reasons why parents choose to homeschool their children based on demographic factors?

For this study, the researcher collected demographic information that included the county in which the participant resides, the number of children homeschooled, the number of people living in the home, and yearly household gross income. The Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to determine if significant differences existed in responses based on demographic variables. These tests were used because the number of responses to the survey was less than thirty. In quantitative research, groups are exposed to different treatments, and the research question examines whether there is any difference between the two groups on some criterion variable. Frequently, a t-test is used unless there are fewer than thirty responses since a normal distribution cannot be determined, (Frey & Richardson, 2018). The α level chosen for this study was the one commonly used in social sciences, .05.

County. All respondents except one lived in either Newton or Boone County. An analysis of the data was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences between the responses of the participants in those two counties regarding reasons why they chose to homeschool their children. The Mann-Whitney test showed there was a significant difference ($U = 12.00, p = .023$) between Newton and Boone county residents regarding the safety issue. Boone county respondents ($n=21, M = 3.24$) were more concerned with the safety issue than the Newton county respondents ($n=4, M = 1.50$). There was also a significant difference in responses regarding spending too much time traveling to and from the public school ($U = 4.00, p = .008$). Newton county respondents

($n = 3$, $M = 3.67$) agreed more that too much time was spent traveling to and from school than did Boone county respondents ($n=21$, $M = 1.67$).

Number of Children Homeschooled. A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed there was a statistically significant difference between the levels of agreement with the statement about offering a different curriculum and the number of children in the household being homeschooled, $\chi^2(4) = 10.321$, $p = .035$. There was a mean rank of 12.00 for a household homeschooling one child, 5.75 for two children, 17.00 for three, 17.00 for four, and 17.00 for five or more. The Mann-Whitney U value was found to be statistically significant, $U = 0.00$ ($Z = -2.00$), $p = .046$, for households homeschooling two and three children. The effect size was large ($r = -.82$). The Mann-Whitney U value was found to be statistically significant, $U = 0.00$ ($Z = -2.00$), $p = .046$, for households homeschooling two and four children. Again, the effect size was large ($r = -.82$). The Mann-Whitney U value was found to be statistically significant, $U = 0.00$ ($Z = -2.93$), $p = .003$, for households homeschooling two and five or more children and the effect size was large ($r = -.93$).

A statistically significant difference between the levels of agreement with the statement about the special needs of children and the number of children in a household that were homeschooled existed, $\chi^2(4) = 9.548$, $p = .049$. There was a mean rank of 8.95 for a household homeschooling one child, 11.88 for two children, 13.25 for three, 17.50 for four, and 19.58 for five or more. The Mann-Whitney U value was found to be statistically significant, $U = 3.50$ ($Z = -0.24$), $p = 0.005$, for households homeschooling two and three children; however, the effect size was small ($r = -.10$).

Number of People Living in Home. A Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed there was a statistically significant difference between the levels of agreement with the statement addressing religion and moral reasoning and the number of people living in a home, $\chi^2(4) = 8.275, p = .016$. There was a mean rank of 6.60 for a household containing three people, 13.00 for four people, and 15.91 for five or more. The Mann-Whitney U test revealed a significant difference between households homeschooling three and five or more people, $U = 0.00 (Z = -2.93), p = .003$. The effect size was large ($r = -.70$).

There was a significant difference between levels of agreement with the statement about offering a different curriculum and the number of people living in a home, $\chi^2(4) = 9.159, p = .010$. There was a mean rank of 8.10 for a household of three people, 10.83 for four people, and 17.00 for five or more. Further analysis using the Mann-Whitney U test revealed a significant difference between households of four and five people, $U = 22.00 (Z = -2.76), p = .038$. The effect size was large ($r = -.62$).

Also, the Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed a significant difference between the levels of agreement with the statement about experiencing an incident with the administration and the number of people living in the household, $\chi^2(4) = 13.518, p = .001$. A mean rank of 22.10 existed for a household containing three people, 9.83 for four people, 11.45 for five or more people. Further analysis using the Mann-Whitney U test revealed a significant difference between households containing three and four people, $U = 1.50 (Z = -3.15), p = .002$, and between households containing three and five or more, $U = 3.00 (Z = -3.02), p = .003$. In both cases, the effect size was large ($r = -.84$ and $r = -.75$, respectively).

Yearly Household Gross Income. A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the levels of agreement with the statement about wanting smaller class sizes and household yearly gross income, $\chi^2(4) = 6.059, p = .048$. A mean rank of 8.00 existed for a household earning less than \$50,000, 17.86 for \$50,000-\$74,999, and 12.31 \$75,000 or more.

Number of Guardians in Workforce. A Mann-Whitney test revealed a significant difference between the levels of agreement with the statement about wanting a different curriculum and the number of guardians in the workforce, $U = 34.50, p = .049$. Families with one guardian in the workforce ($n = 17; M = 4.76$) were more concerned with wanting a different curriculum than families with two guardians in the workforce ($n = 8, M = 3.63$). There was also a significant difference between the levels of agreement with the statement about having students with special needs and the number of guardians in the workforce, $U = 20.50, p = .004$. Families with one working parent ($n = 17, M = 3.59$) expressed more concern for their child's special needs than those families with two guardians in the workforce ($n = 8, M = 1.63$).

Research Question 3: What public school reform factors could influence homeschooling parents to send their children to public schools?

To address this question, the researcher included two open-ended questions in the survey. These questions allowed parents who homeschool their students to reflect on their answers and give feedback which might lead to changes being made in the current public school system.

After reviewing the responses, three areas of concern from the parents were evident in the majority of the answers. First, was the academics in the current public school system are not meeting the needs of the students as reported in 65% of the comments from parents. Many of the parents expressed concern about the curriculum that was being used focused too much on high stakes testing rather than a quality education. In the survey, a parent had the following to say, "It seems that students are primarily being taught so that they will perform well on tests, rather than teaching them the tools of learning."

Additionally, the structure and size of the classes were areas of concern. Parents believed that the size of the classes was too large and the education within those classrooms should be more individualized to meet the needs of all the students within the classroom. This sentiment included both the students in special education as well as the higher achieving students. One parent stated, "Public schools need to invest in the top 10% of students highly." This parent continued to discuss how the public school system meets the needs of those struggling students but needs to focus on high achieving students as well.

The second area of focus and reform that the public schools need to undertake is in the area of moral and religious instruction. Parents expressed concern over the lack of religious and moral education occurring in our current system. Many of the parents expressed interest in teaching the Bible and letting God back into the public school system. "Religious instruction is certainly one of our factors. The public schools need to find a way not to be so hostile towards faith issues." They showed understanding that this is not entirely in the hands of the local public school but rather needs to be addressed

at the national and state levels. One parent stated, "All too often, I have heard public school teachers express frustration because they are not allowed to teach anymore because of so many governmental restraints or requirements." Another parent stated, "From an outsider's perspective, it seems that a political, social agenda tie the local systems' hands. A solution to this problem is that there should be more local control of the school system than federal control."

One final area of change parents expressed was in the accountability of teachers and students. First, in the area of teachers, parents expressed the following, "Teachers should be highly motivated to instill a love of learning in their students. They need to love what they do. If that is not their passion, they need to be replaced. Firing bad teachers should not be so hard." Parents feel as if teachers should, as one individual stated, "Equip students with the skills to learn and educate themselves. They should also help students discover what skills they possess. Help them develop their interests and expound on those interests so that they can develop a skill set for their future." According to the parents, this should extend to the administrators as well. They should be held to a high standard of conduct, both morally and ethically.

Regarding the students, parents feel the students should be more accountable for their actions, with both good and bad consequences. One parent stated, "Making students more accountable. Do not be afraid to give a student an F when they deserve it, or an A when they deserve it." Parents expressed concern that students were going through the motions and would be passed to the next grade no matter the quality of their work.

Summary of Question 3

According to the survey results, parents expressed variable reasons that aided in their decision to homeschool their child(ren). However, the data shows parents are most concerned with the current academic curriculum, class size, class structure, lack of moral and religious teaching, and accountability of the students and the teachers. Each of these areas were addressed multiple times in the responses on the possible public school reform questions.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Nationally, homeschool enrollment increased 62% from 2003 to 2012, and raw numbers of homeschool students may now exceed two million children (Kararo & Knobloch, 2018, p. 37). The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons parents in Boone and Newton Counties in Arkansas are choosing to homeschool their child(ren). The researcher wanted to gain a better understanding of the homeschooling population in Boone and Newton Counties and use this information to drive possible reform in the local public schools. Additionally, it was the hope of the researcher to use this data to develop strategies that would entice parents to return their children to the public school

According to the number of students being homeschooled, the researcher expected to receive approximately one hundred survey responses. However, even with the constant reminders and extending the deadline for an additional five days, only twenty-six responses were recorded. If this study were conducted again, the researcher would have gone to the homeschool cooperatives and spoken directly to the parents. During this meeting, the researcher would explain the study and answer any questions that might arise. By having a face-to-face interaction, it could have helped the parents to understand better why the information is being obtained and take away the fear of the unknown. The researcher would assure the parents that the survey would not collect any personal data.

Even though the survey returned a low number of responses, the researcher believes it was a good study with worthwhile results. In the open response portion, the responses were thorough and consistent with the data from the Likert Scale portion.

These responses provided valuable feedback that may be used to transform the local public schools.

Summary of Results

Research Question 1: What are the reasons parents in two Northwest Arkansas counties homeschool their children?

According to the data collected from the survey the overall reason parents in Boone and Newton Counties decided to homeschool is for moral and or religious reasons. After inputting the data into SPSS, the sum, mean, and median for moral and religious reasons were 116, 4.64, and 5.00 respectively. Other factors were high on the list and included having school peers with shared values and individualized instruction with each having a sum of 115, means of 4.60, and modes of 5.00. The two lowest reasons to homeschool were frequent job location and issues with staff members. This factor came in with a mean close to 1.5 and a sum less than 50.

These findings are in contradiction to what the researcher hypothesized would be the main reason parents would choose to homeschool in these counties. The researcher estimated the number one reason would be to provide a safer environment for the students to receive an education. Many times on the news and in articles, school safety is discussed as a significant concern. Nevertheless, according to the data collected, bullying and school safety are ranked near the bottom of parents' reason homeschool their child(ren).

The results of the survey displayed the central theme that moral and religious instruction are the most important reason parents choose to homeschool. The data from the survey could be based on the geographic location of Boone and Newton counties

which are located in the Bible Belt of America. A substantial majority of the population attends church regularly, which is a contradiction to the rest of the nation as a whole. A substantial number of churches are located throughout the communities within these counties. The vast majority of these churches are Protestant; however, various non-denominational churches are also established in the demographic region.

When parents had a chance to respond to the open response question, it was apparent they were seeking to bring faith back into their child's education. Many of the comments revolved around putting God back into the curriculum and teaching their children about their faith. A parent put it this way, "I did not want my children exposed to the bias of topics such as evolution, big bang theory, gender identity, diversity, and similar controversial topics. I want to teach them to measure these topics to the truths of God's Word." An education based on faith would not be allowed to happen in a public school system according to this person. However, homeschooling allows this parent the freedom to educate their child in the way in which they see fit without government regulations. Another parent put it this way, "Religious instruction is certainly one of our factors. The public schools need to find a way not to be so hostile towards faith issues." Along the same line, parents expressed concern that the public school system failed to meet the needs of the students concerning moral education. Parents were looking for ways to incorporate moral and ethical education into the curriculum alongside the religious aspect.

In addition to the moral and religious curriculum, spending time with peers who have shared values, and individualized instruction tied for second place as the top reason for homeschooling. In the open response section of the survey parents expressed concern

about what is going on in the public school systems and that they wanted their child (ren) to be around like-minded individuals with shared values. A parent had this to say about the students in the public school system, "A big problem is kids' immorality and disrespect for others." A parent needs to be able to trust their child's friends enough to let them make wise decisions.

Individualized instruction, which was tied for the second highest reason for homeschooling, is consistent with current studies on the topic of homeschooling. Parents are looking for a curriculum that challenges their students and teaches them to become learners rather than memorize items for a government issued standardized test. Parents want the ability to provide their child with a curriculum that is tailored to their unique abilities and interests. From the open-ended question in the survey, a parent stated this,

I want my children to be well rounded and not just taught to be able to take tests. I believe the public school has failed our children. They need more time to play and get out their energy than sitting still in a classroom for hours at a time.

Homeschooling allows this parent to do just this, tailor the instruction their child receives and the schedule they follow based on the parent's wishes and beliefs.

The lowest scoring reasons to homeschool dealt with issues with school staff members and frequent job relocation. In the comments about school staff, there were a few that discussed teachers and administration. "Parents need to know and believe that the administration values them and they need to be a part of giving education to their students," stated one parent. Other comments revolved around a teacher's willingness to help all students learn, especially the high achieving students. One parent expressed their dream for teachers to instill the love of learning in the students rather than just

memorizing facts and figures. Regarding administration, one parent stated they want the administration to be trustworthy and willing to help. It is apparent that the schools need to become better listeners to the stakeholders of the community.

The counties in which these surveys were administered are not very transient.

Most of the families in the community have long-standing family ties.

Furthermore, the jobs within the community are stable. The companies do not transfer employees to other parts of the country very often. This could be a reason why job relocation ranked so low as a reason for homeschooling with a mean of only 1.68.

Research Question 2: Are there any significant differences in reasons why parents choose to homeschool their children based on demographic factors?

After analyzing the data, demographic factors had an impact on the reasons in which parents decided to homeschool their children. These areas included the county in which the family resided, number of children in the home being homeschooled, number of people living in the home, yearly gross income, and number of guardians in the workforce. Other reasons were considered, but the data was too similar to draw distinct differences in significance. These areas included data on the person who mainly provides the instruction for the homeschool students and number of guardians in the home. Of the survey participants in the study, only one person stated that they were currently living in a single parent home.

The data collected on the reasons parents decided to homeschool had one area in which numerous reasons were considered significant. This factor was the number of people living in the home. Under this factor, six reasons were considered a significant

influence on the reason to homeschool. Those reasons included the following: religion, wanting to provide a different curriculum, incident with administrator, incident with a staff member, having a student with special needs, and frequent job relocation.

After further analyzation of demographic data, several generalizations and conclusions arose. First, safety was a larger concern of parents living in Boone County, while travel time to and from school was more significant in Newton County. Boone County, is a more populated county and has larger schools, while Newton County is considered more rural and consists of smaller schools that are spread farther apart geographically.

Homeschooling on the basis of number of children homeschooled had a statistically significant higher effect size in the households with two and three children, two and four children, and two and five children when addressing moral and religious reasoning. While the number of children being homeschooled has a small to medium effect size in terms of having a student with a special needs.

Another area examined and concluded to have a large effect size was in households containing three, five, or more people on deciding to homeschool in based on moral and religious instruction. The effect size for this demographic was ($r=.70$) which is considered large. Households containing three to five or more people had a large effect size on basing the decision to homeschool on the ability to provide a different curriculum. The difference between households homeschooling three and four people was large ($r=.84$) on the basis of having an incident with an administrator.

Yearly gross income and number of guardians in the workforce also had a statistically significant difference between the different categories. Yearly gross income

only produced a small to medium effect size on wanting smaller classes,. Families in which one guardian was in the workforce were more concerned with wanting a different curriculum than the families with two working guardians. Furthermore, families with one working guardian expressed more concern over a meeting a student's special needs than a family with two working guardians.

Research Question 3: What public school reform factors could influence homeschooling parents to send their children to public schools?

For this section of the study, open response questions were used to gather data. Parents were asked the following questions: (a) If you could change the public school so that you would send your child (ren) to the school, what would you change; (b) What are two other areas in which the current public school system needs to change and then asked for suggestions. These questions allowed the respondents to give feedback and reasons that may not have been stated in the earlier part of the survey. An overwhelming majority of the parents focused on morals, religion, and academics. The issues included items such as the curriculum being taught, class size, the method of instruction, and focus of the instruction. Parents stated they thought that the curriculum which is being used is biased and teaching the students the wrong items and in the wrong way. They wanted more of a focus on being able to think and reason rather than rote memory.

Furthermore, the curriculum needed to at least address Christianity, faith, and moral education. One parent stated this about public school curriculum, "Christianity is the only religion not allowed to discuss anymore. It is certainly biased. We need to allow those that believe in practicing in all areas of their life, including school." With the current regulations put on schools, incorporating religious curriculum into the public

schools will be a difficult task. However, in Boone and Newton Counties it is to be an essential one to increase enrollment.

Another topic of reform that was popular was student accountability. The respondents believed public schools were too lenient and should be more stringent in their enforcement of policies. If a student fails to meet expectations, then they should be removed from the situation or require more parental involvement, even in the school setting. The respondents also believed, like in life, there are consequences for a person's actions whether good or bad and a person must be able to accept those consequences. The researcher did not expect this to be an issue, but student accountability was frequently mentioned.

One final topic of discussion in terms of public school reform was extracurricular activities, especially athletics. This reasoning was not one of the most popular reform topics; however, it did garner some attention. Sports play a significant role in the functioning of a school; however, parents feel they receive too much priority. One parent states the following in regards to athletics, "the public school system needs to change is the deep unhealthy imbalance of interscholastic sports. Our fixation on interscholastic sports is way out of balance, and our kids are the losers." The same parent did state that not all aspects of sports are detrimental but as a whole priorities need to be readjusted. Parents feel too much time and energy is put into extracurricular activities when it could be better spent in the area of academics. This parent was not the only one to feel this way. Others made comments about the focus and need to be on educating the students rather than competing in sports. Furthermore, they also stated that extracurricular activities are there to enhance the education of a student not become the main focus.

Implications of Findings

After all, data was collected and analyzed, moral and religious issues were the top reason parents in Boone and Newton Counties decided to homeschool their child(ren). This data is consistent with prior research conducted and data collected. The finding of this study is more relevant to the reason homeschooling first began to become popular. However, the trend in recent years has shifted away from religion and morals as a prime reason for homeschooling to a more substantial focus on curriculum and safety. Based on the data, schools in Boone and Newton Counties must find ways to incorporate morals and religion into the curriculum or the homeschool numbers will continue to increase. One possible solution to this concern is by allowing the students to enroll in an online religion course and then accept it as an elective credit. This step would allow the school to incorporate religion without directly teaching the course.

Individualized instruction placed a strong second. This reason for homeschooling is more in line with the current research being conducted. Schools must find a way to differentiate instruction and curriculum for all students and not just those that are college bound. Getting all students to go to college has been the mindset of lawmakers and educators in the past decade. However, college is not for everyone. Schools need to provide a curriculum that meets the needs and interests of all students. This curriculum could include vocational and technical training.

Spending time with their student and flexibility of homeschool were also favorite reasons for homeschool. One parent said that homeschooling allowed them to deal with the heart issues at home. They also expressed that they felt as if homeschooling caused their children to be closer to the parents rather than other peers. This time allows the

bond to continue and strengthen between parent and child. The flexibility of homeschool allows the parents to dictate their schedule rather than conform to a government entity. The parents can adjust the school day or week to fit the needs of the family. To meet the flexibility desire of parents, public schools could begin to offer more online curriculum and allow the students to complete some of the work off campus. This step would allow the student to adjust their schedule to fit their needs while still receiving a quality education through the local public school.

In Boone and Newton Counties, the fear of bullying and school safety are low on the list. This finding is also in contradiction to the widespread feeling and research conducted in the rest of the nation. Parents in these counties had more fear of exposure to drugs or alcohol than they did about safety. Their reasoning in this area could be because each of the local school districts employs at least one school resource officer.

Limitations of the Study

Two significant limitations of this study existed. First, the study focused on only two homeschool consortiums. These consortiums were located in Boone and Newton County, which are located in Northwest Arkansas. The constituents in this area are primarily Caucasian in race and located within a moderately rural environment. Another limitation of this study is that homeschool populations do not always make themselves available for surveys about their practices. Therefore, the population to the survey was reluctant to divulge too much data and the number of surveys returned was lower than expected.

Throughout this study, the local homeschool cooperative in Boone County was very forthcoming and welcoming. However, the cooperative in Newton County was not

as organized and has deteriorated to a small number in the past year, therefore did not allow for much interaction with the researcher. The decline of enrollment in the Newton County homeschool cooperative began when the Jasper Public School District, which encompasses three schools in Newton County, began to offer a digital curriculum as well as a flexible schedule during the 2017-2018 school year. Re-enrollment in the public institution during this time. This influx of students could be because the school is meeting the needs and wants of the parents in the survey. The Jasper School District is providing the students with flexibility and a different curriculum to receive their education.

Many of the parents still wanting to homeschool joined forces with the Boone County homeschool. A small number, less than fifteen students, still meet in Newton County. While the other homeschool population provides homeschool using the more traditional model or online resources. The researcher was able to gather information on this group through the Facebook post by the cooperative director to the homeschool support groups in Boone County and surrounding counties. Data was collected from both counties through the same digital survey.

Recommendations and Future Research

Homeschooling is going to keep gaining popularity unless the public school systems change some of their current practices. The information and data gathered from this survey need to be shared with other stakeholders within the two counties survey, the state, and the rest of the country. Educational practices in America need to change. The public schools are being housed and conducted similarly to what they were fifty years ago. Times and the best practices are continually changing, and the school system must

make a dramatic shift as well. The curriculum and how students are getting an education is failing to meet the wants and needs of the stakeholders. Students should be given more of a voice and choice when in regards to their education. Educators and lawmakers must find a way to incorporate moral and religious education into the curriculum. Students should be able to choose from different curriculum and paths to take to meet their interests and needs. The students should also have the flexibility to complete some of their school work off campus digitally instead of the traditional brick and mortar school. Religious and moral classes could be offered voluntarily as elective credit, either in person or digitally, for those families that deem it beneficial and essential. Currently, in Arkansas, this is on the 2019 legislative slate.

Further quantitative and qualitative research needs to be conducted on the homeschooling movement. Specifically, studies need to be conducted on how to provide students with individualized curriculum paths based on their interests and skill sets. The schools need to find new and innovative ways to educate students and in the process become more flexible in the education they provide. Furthermore, a qualitative study could be conducted within the same homeschool cooperatives in Boone and Newton Counties. This qualitative study could produce more in depth information on the reasons parents are choosing to homeschool. The interview process would allow the researcher to gain more in depth information.

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Appendix A. Arkansas Tech IRB Approval



**Office of Sponsored Programs
and University Initiatives**

Administration Building, Room 207
1509 North Boulder Avenue
Russellville, Arkansas 72801

Office: 479-880-4327
www.atsu.edu

February 28, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

The Arkansas Tech University Institutional Review Board has approved Kyle Mallett's IRB application, "Reasons Parents Are Choosing to Homeschool in Rural Northwest Arkansas," through February 28, 2022. The approval code is Mallett_022819.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Kuroki".

Masanori Kuroki, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair



Appendix B.
Purpose of Survey and Link

My Name is Kyle Mallett and I am the Assistant Principal at Harrison Middle School. I am a doctoral student at Arkansas Tech University and am conducting research for my dissertation which focuses on the reasons parents in Boone and Newton Counties are choosing to homeschool their children.

I would like to invite you to participate in the study by completing an anonymous Google survey. The survey consists of 48 questions and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. No identifiable data will be collected.

The questions in the survey will gather information on the reasons in which you choose to homeschool your child (ren). Two questions are also posed about public school reform. These questions are not meant to pressure you to return to the public school system. The results will be used to reform current policies and practices to better meet the needs of all students.

Please feel free to contact me at my ATU email: kmallett@atu.edu or my cell at 870-213-5563 should you have additional questions.

[Kyle Mallett Reason to Homeschool Survey](#)

Appendix C.

Reasons Parents Choose to Homeschool Survey

2/20/2019

Reasons for Homeschooling

Reasons for Homeschooling

Thank you for participating in this survey about the reasons in which you chose to homeschool your child(ren). Questions about possible public reform will be addressed. Information gathered from this survey will be confidential and no email addresses or identifying information will be gathered. Please answer the questions honestly. By clicking I agree you are volunteering to participate in the study.

*** Required**

1. I agree to participate in the study. *

Mark only one oval.

☐

Yes

☐

No

Stop filling out this form.

Reasons for Homeschooling

2. In what County do you reside *

Mark only one oval.

☐

Boone

☐

Newton

☐

Other:

3. How many child(ren) do you currently homeschool? *

Mark only one oval.

☐

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5+

4. In what grade(s) would your homeschooled child(ren) be if they were attending a public school? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Kindergarten
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10
- ☐ 11
- ☐ 12

5. Have any of your child(ren) ever attended a public school? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. How long have you been home-schooling your child(ren)?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 1 year or less
- ☐ 2 years
- ☐ 3 years
- ☐ 4 years
- ☐ 5+ years

7. Who mainly provides the homeschool instruction for your child(ren)? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Grandparent
- ☐ Other family member
- ☐ Neighbor/friend
- ☐ Local Homeschool group
- ☐ Online Organization
- ☐ Other: _____

8. Is any of your child(ren)'s instruction provided by local homeschool group such as a cooperative or Classical Conversations group? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

9. If you answered yes to using a homeschool group, what was your primary, or most important, reason to use this approach?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Social interaction with like minded families, field trips, athletics, etc.
☐ Academic Instruction
☐ Curriculum
☐ Other

10. If you answered yes to using a homeschool group, what was your second most important reason to use this approach?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Social interaction with like minded families, field trips, athletics, etc.
☐ Academic Instruction
☐ Curriculum
☐ Other

11. If in a homeschool group, how many days a week does your child(ren) attend?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5

12. If in a homeschool group, do any of your children participate in the homeschool group participate in Athletics?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

13. If in a homeschool group, do any of your children participate in the homeschool group participate in Field Trips?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

14. If in a homeschool group, do any of your children participate in the homeschool group participate in other competitions?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

15. Does your child(ren) participate in extracurricular activities through local public school? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

16. If you answered yes to question above, which public school activity? (Click all that apply)

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Sport
☐ Band
☐ Choir
☐ Club
☐ Other: _____

17. Does your child(ren) take any academic courses at the public school? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

18. If you answered yes to question above, what courses?

19. Are you, or would you, consider placing your child(ren) back into the public school as the public school currently exists? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Reasons for Homeschooling

This section will focus on the reasons in which you choose to homeschool your child(ren).

The following statements are reasons why someone might homeschool their child(ren). Please indicate your level of agreement with the statement. 1 indicates you strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= neutral; 4= agree; 5 indicates strongly agree.

20. I was concerned about my child's physical safety in a public school. **Mark only one oval.*

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

21. I was concerned my child would be bullied in a public school. **Mark only one oval.*

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

22. I was concerned my child would be exposed to drugs/alcohol in a public school. **Mark only one oval.*

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

23. I wanted my child(ren) to be around others(peers) who share my values and beliefs. **Mark only one oval.*

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

24. I wanted my child to receive moral/religious instruction. **Mark only one oval.*

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

25. I wanted to provide a non-traditional approach to education. **Mark only one oval.*

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

26. I wanted more academic rigor than what is provided in a public school. **Mark only one oval.*

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

27. I wanted to provide a different curriculum than what is offered in the public school. *
- Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

28. I did not want my child exposed to the Common Core curriculum. *
- Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

29. I wanted my child in a smaller class. *
- Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

30. My child had an incident with another student that influenced my decision to homeschool my child. *
- Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

31. I had an incident with a public school teacher that influenced my decision to homeschool my child. *
- Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

32. I had an incident with a public school administrator that influenced my decision to homeschool my child. *
- Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

33. I had an incident with a public school staff member (other than a teacher or administrator) that influenced my decision to homeschool my child. *

Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

34. I disagreed with one or more public school policies. *

Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

35. I wanted more individualized instruction for my child. *

Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

36. My child has special needs/illness that are better met in a homeschool environment. *

Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

37. I wanted to spend more time with my child(ren). *

Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

38. I wanted more flexibility to schedule trips, vacations, experiences, etc. *

Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

39. My child spent too much time traveling to/from the public school. *

Mark only one oval.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

40. My situation or job requires frequent travel or relocation. **Mark only one oval.*

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree |

41. Other reasons important in your decision to homeschool your child(ren). *

Public School Reform

The researcher is not trying to influence you to return your child(ren) to a public school setting. However, the researcher would like to examine the areas in which public schools could change to make the public school setting more appealing to others and better meet the needs/wishes of the students currently enrolled.

42. If you could change the public school so that you would send you child(ren) to the school, what would you change? *

43. What are two areas in which the current public school system needs to change? What are your suggestions for improving these two areas? *

Demographic Information**44. Number of parents/legal guardians in the home ****Mark only one oval.*

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3 or more

45. How many people, including children, live in the home? **Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5+

46. Approximate household yearly gross income **Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ \$0-\$24,999
- ☐ \$25,000-\$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000-\$74,000
- ☐ \$75,000 or more

47. Number of parents/guardians in the workforce? **Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3 or more

48. If you have any additional comments regarding your homeschool decision, please enter them below.

49. Thank you for your participation in this survey.
